

AFFAIRS OF THE WEEK IN THE PLAYHOUSES



CHRISTMAS TREE GIRLS IN THE "ZIEGFELD FOLLIES," NEW AMSTERDAM THEATRE.

PLAYS & PLAYERS

THE UNUSUAL MINT OF THIS YEAR'S FOLLIES.

In the theatre, as elsewhere, we oftenest find where we do not seek. For the last ten years we have been seeking diligently, at times fruitlessly, for the American art of the theatre. We were on the point of finding it in the work of William Vaughn Moody, when death cut short our hopes; young Edward Sheldon showed signs of it in his "Salvation Nell," and we have not yet given up hope that some day the Jekyll that is in him will assert itself and destroy the sensationalist that is his Hyde; we thought we had found it in Eugene Walter, but his "Eliot Way" has found no success. And the last season has apparently left it deeper than ever in the distance, a season divided, as far as the Americans went, between the ogres of melodrama and the clowns of farce. Then last week came "The Follies," the realm *par excellence* of the tired and bald-headed business man, the delight of the undergraduate, the stamping ground of Diamond Jim Brady—and, *mirabilis mirabilis*, we received what all the writers of the so-called legitimate drama had been unable to give us—the thrill of art!

Now, of course, Mr. Urban's scenery was partly responsible for this thrill, and Mr. Urban not being an American it will doubtless be argued unfits "The Follies" for being judged as a purely American product. Yet the fact remains that only in America could Mr. Urban's art have been applied to a musical revue; and only in America could a musical revue have been produced with the luxury of the one now on view at the New Amsterdam Theatre. It would, of course, be idle to assert that all "The Follies" contains is artistic; by no stretch of imagination could this be applied, for instance, to the singing of the chorus, and to most of the appearances of Mr. Bernard Granville, and yet the total effect was one of real beauty, both of idea and execution.

Well deserved praise has been lavished by a hundred writers on Mr. Laurence and Mr. Ames for what they have done for the American theatre. Who has dared to link with theirs the name of Flo Ziegfeld? Yet "The Follies of 1915" possess, as many of their forerunners have possessed, a genuine creative note. Their costumes and novelties and dances are American, and Bert Williams, despite his color, is American. If any one doubts that a revue cannot possess beauty, let him go to the New Amsterdam and be converted. If any one doubts that a negro cannot be an artist, let him see and listen to Bert Williams. Mr. Williams is a comedian of the first rank, an artist whose humor projects across the footlights with an economy of means that is extraordinary. With the exception of Mr. De Wolf Hopper, Mr. Francis Wilson and perhaps one or two others, Mr. Williams has no peers upon the American comic stage. His part in this year's Follies is not long enough—this is the only criticism that can be made. But it is not Mr. Williams nor even Mr. Urban who makes "The Follies" what they are—it is the informing spirit of Mr. Ziegfeld. Now the uplifters may object, yet Mr. Ziegfeld remains an artist in spite of them. Perhaps he is not a moralist, and there may have been times when he might have drawn the lines of reticence a little tighter, but on the whole "The Follies" have in them more genuine understanding of the wants of human nature and a keener sense of beauty than is possessed by nine-tenths of the so-called serious plays projected upon the public. Let us have done with cant, and enjoy a good revue when it is offered us. The book of "The Follies" can be improved; yet Mr. Pollock's delightful little song of "Poor Marie-Odile" shows what one of the librettists is capable of if given the chance. Why not next year cut out some of Mr. Granville and give Miss Claire half a dozen such songs to sing? Then the book of "The Follies" will be worthy

of its scenery, its costumes, its dances, its girls, and even of its Bert Williams!

PALISADES PARK.
Theatrical folks who are numbered among the stay-at-homes this summer seem to have taken to the water, as every day a throng of Broadway favorites are to be found sporting in the surf at Schenck Brothers Palisades Amusement Park. Every convenience is to be found here for the novice as well as the expert bather. High and low spring-boards line both sides of the spotlessly clean white concrete tank, which appeals to the diving nymphs, while for those who delight in "jumping the breakers" a wave machine rolls billows on a sandy beach. The natatorium is one of the show places in the vicinity of Manhattan, as it is a combination of mountain and seashore, hundreds of feet above the level of the sea.
Aside from the scores of free attractions, the Avitable-Martelli English Opera Company offer for the third week attraction a company of fifty in "Carmen," with Miss Agnes Robinson in the stellar role. This organization has established itself firmly for the summer at the resort theatre, as they are providing an excellent cast in every opera, which is appreciated by large audiences.

Current Attractions.

Longacre—"A Full House."
The Playhouse—"Sinners."
Globe—"Chin-Chin."
George M. Cohan's—"It Pays to Advertise."
Booth—"The Bubble."
Candler—"On Trial."
Columbia Theatre—"Burlesque."
Danse de Follies—"Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic."
Winter Garden—"The Passing Show of 1915."
Harris—"Twin Beds."
Maxine Elliott—"Nobody Home."
Castles in the Air—"Look Who's Here."
New Amsterdam Theatre—"Ziegfeld's Follies of 1915."
Standard—"The Easiest Way."

RAGTIME OF LONG AGO

Frances Demarest Comments Upon Ancient Music.

Frances Demarest, prima donna of "The Passing Show of 1915," at the Winter Garden declares that the ancient Greek knew and made use of ragtime—otherwise syncopation. Miss Demarest has made a study of all forms of music.

"Syncopation, or ragtime," says Miss Demarest, "was the stock in trade of most of the great composers. It is a striking feature in Hungarian music; it can sometimes be heard even in sailors' chanteys. Only the mediocre composer and the mediocre performer seem to have no use for it. It is reported that a learned professor in the early sixties said to a woman amateur: 'You can play syncopation? Then you must be a good musician!'"

"It seems to be the impression of some that this well known species of rhythm was discovered on this side of the Atlantic, and some of these ragtime writers have been as pleased with their discovery as the street Arab who, on being taken to the country, discovered that flowers grow along the roadway! These 'ragtimers' are a few centuries behind. In Spitta's 'Life of Bach' we read that Vivaldi, the violinist, who died in 1743, was supposed to have invented syncopation; that it became popular in his day under the name of the 'Lombardic style,' and that Bach and others imitated Vivaldi's use of it. But students of composition have al-

ways known syncopation under the name of the 'fourth species of counterpoint.' Apparently no one seems to have recognized that the 'Lombardic style' was the same thing in smaller notes—again an instance of there be-

Vaudeville

EVA TANGUAY AGAIN AT THE PALACE—THE BROOKLYN BILLS

Palace Theatre.

Eva Tanguay will be the central sun of entertainment at the Palace this week, with eight prominent vaudeville planets revolving about her. Miss Tanguay will sing new songs and old. Eva Tanguay is, in the phrase of Arthur Symonds, "collectedly extravagant." Her "learned fury wakes the sense" with a delirium of song. William Courtleigh, supported by De Witt C. Jennings and an excellent company, will present "The Man Higher Up," a dramatic sketch by William C. De Mille. Sam and Kitty Morton, "the best of the old timers," will appear in "Back to Where They Started." Others on the bill will be Cecil Cunningham; Eduardo and Elisa Cansino; Wyatt's Scotch Lads and Lassies, in a novelty offering; Herman Wasserman, the young Polish pianist and protege of Paderewski, and Ward, Bell and Ward, in "Under the White Top."

Prospect Theatre.

Ten favorite Keith acts, each performing a native of Brooklyn, will com-

prise the new bill arranged for Keith's Prospect Theatre this week, which has been termed "Old Home Week" by the management. The Prospect Theatre during this week will be given over to Brooklynites exclusively; Brooklyn theatre patrons, Brooklyn entertainers, Brooklyn stage hands, a native Brooklyn manager at the theatre, and, in short, Brooklynized to the smallest detail. Among those on the bill are Belle Blanche, Clarke and Bergman, Ryan and Tierney, Harry Girard and company and Walter Van Brunt.

Direct from George M. Cohan's "Hello Broadway" will come Belle Blanche, the prima donna impersonator; Gladys Clark and Harry Bergman will present for this week only "A Baseball Flirtation"; Jack Ryan and Harry Tierney, the song writers and composers, have been retained for another week by popular request; Harry Girard and company will pre-

ing something in the name by which the thing is called. Moreover, the students were not the only persons who knew the secret. The Ploughman in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book (formerly called Queen Elizabeth's Virginal

Book) whistles more than half his merry air in what has hitherto been called syncopation, but which we now know should be called ragtime. The greatest ragtime of the nineteenth century was Schumann. A Cambridge don once remarked that Schumann sometimes carried syncopation to such a length as to incur a danger of the original accentuation being lost to the ear. But everyone is now familiar with Schumann's music and understands what the composer is driving at. The same composer's "March of the Davidsbundler Against the Philistines" ends up with such an orgy of ragtime as must have completely discomfited the Philistines who first heard it.

"But though it has been customary to say that the frequent use of syncopation was a special feature of Schumann's music, this did not mean that other composers neglected it. On the contrary, Beethoven, Brahms and all the modern giants have relied on it for some of their most striking effects, for the artistic and purposeful disturbance of the normal regularity of accents imparts a special energy to music, which at once arrests the attention of the intelligent listener. We have only to think of the verve and enthusiasm of Hungarian dances, now happily so familiar to us. Their intense energy, the fire with which they inspire the executants, are largely due to the constant recurrence of syncopation combined with great rapidity of movement. Yet the disturbance of accent is so exquisitely mingled with regularity that there is no chance of the ear becoming mystified."

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Mr. Phillips Goes To War and Is Thrown

The critic of "The London Times" does not wax enthusiastic over Stephen Phillips's latest dramatic venture in blank verse and prose. The play is entitled "Armageddon," and is, of course, about the war, though the prologue and epilogue are both laid in Hell. The whole thing appears to be a phantasmagoria, with the apparent view of showing that the Allies respect women and the moral law, and that the Germans are liars and Hunst! Writes the critic, who is presumably Mr. Walkley:

"Various and typical aspects of the war, presented on the kaleidoscopic or haphazard plan, and expressed alternately in blank verse which never falls in smoothness and in prose which seldom, if ever, attains distinction. There is a prologue in Hell, with a 'decoration' that seems to have been inspired by Blake, and a debate of the fallen angels, which is, of course, Miltonic in origin if in nothing else. Satan (Mr. Martin Harvey), a nearly nude figure with black wings very deftly managed, goaded by his discontented subjects into exhibiting some form of activity, summons the shade of Attila, and sends him forth to bring war and rapine upon the planet Earth. Then a view of Reims bombarded by the Germans, with pictures of German barbarity and 'frightfulness'—prisoners shot, women insulted, interceding priests (Mr. Martin Harvey is the leading abbe) mocked at, and so forth. German sentiments about world-power declaimed over drafts of champagne by the commander (Mr. Charles Glenney). An asphyxiating shell, which causes instant but painless death, puts an end to the Germans and to the scene—an inevitable scene in any English war play, true enough to fact, of course, but not any the more acceptable to the aesthetic sense for being true. Contrasted scene: a peaceful English orchard, according to the playbill, but a very theatrical orchard with apple trees like oaks and no evidence of pomological skill. It is, however, the background of a sincere emotion—the repressed grief of a mother on learning of the death of her soldier son, expressed with the unmistakable feeling of a poet by the author and nobly rendered by Miss Mary Rorke. This short but poignant scene is the best thing in the play.

With a shake of the kaleidoscope you return to prose, and remarkably prosaic prose, in which the director of the German Press Bureau, dictates to his minions picturesque lies about the miserable state of England. By an unlucky accident, however, a single word of truth has intruded among his lies, and for this blunder he is dismissed by an emissary of the Kaiser. Mr. Phillips's irony is of the easy and obvious order, and the scene, though actually short, seems too long.

Next scene: one of those anticipations of victory also inevitable in every war play. The Allies have entered Cologne, and through their generals (Mr. Edward Saxe and Mr. Fisher White) France and Belgium argue with the English commander (Mr. Martin Harvey) the case for revenge. The Englishman is against until he is infuriated by the news of the death of his son and mutilation of the corpse, but a vision of Joan of Arc (Miss de Silva) restores his better frame of

mind. The typical French, Belgian and British views are fairly and forcibly represented in the argument—forcibly rather than poetically. There was a poetic notion, no doubt, in the Joan of Arc vision, some idea of spiritual beauty, but this germ hardly developed into full fruition on the stage last night. Incidentally, you were shown the Allies' respect for women and for a moral law. It is worth noting that the audience testified its concurrence in the humane policy ultimately settled by the English commander.

Epilogue: in Hell again. Attila reports what has happened, but admits virtual defeat, which he attributes to some power of goodness which he cannot understand. Satan is enraged, but a beam of light from above falls upon him, and he cowers, stricken, to the ground under wings now limp and ragged. On the whole, a medley rather than an organism, a serious variety entertainment or revue on the theme of war, with ratiocination in lieu of songs. German brutality, so horrible in fact, becomes merely tedious in fiction, as everything becomes tedious when familiar in advance. Of art really does you note for remembrance the Blakeish effects in Hell, the bereaved mother of Miss Rorke, and, perhaps, some of the debate at Cologne. At the fall of the curtain Mr. Harvey had to make a speech of thanks to a house which was good to see crowded, as the whole proceeds of the night are to be handed over to the Wounded Allies' Relief Committee.

New Brighton Theatre.

Lovers of good music have an unusual treat in store for them at the New Brighton Theatre the coming week, when Orville Harrold, of the Century Opera Company, makes his Brighton Beach debut. His present vaudeville tour is made possible by the war, for, had it not been for the strife abroad, he would now be fulfilling contracts in London and on the Continent. During his New Brighton engagement Mr. Harrold will sing several numbers, including his "I'm Falling in Love with Some One" solo from "Naughty Marietta." Edward Ables, now a big favorite in moving pictures, will play a special vaudeville engagement in Grant Stewart's comedy, "He Tried To Be Nice." He will be assisted by Charlotte Lander. Ben Welch has just concluded a successful season at the head of his own company. Willa Holt Wakefield will offer a new repertoire of songs. Another notable feature will be the initial vaudeville appearance of Ceno Hodgkins and Mile. Bestrees in a dance conception styled "La Cafe Futuriste," in which a special orchestra and a novel scenic production are employed. Mile. Bestrees was brought to America by Charles B. Dillingham, who will introduce her in his autumn revue. A refreshing contribution will be that of James Diamond and Sissy Brennan, two musical comedy favorites, who have earned distinction in the two-a-day. Mr. Diamond is at present a comedian of the elongated eccentric type, while Miss Brennan is an attractive young person with a good voice and a happy faculty for the play of feminine finery. Ray Dooley, a petite and exceedingly vivacious miss, with Elmer Graham and Gordon Dooley, will present a conglomerate of melody and merriment calculated to please the most discriminating.



Drawn by Lambert Guenther at the front of the Winter Garden's Passing Show, 1915.